

An engaging educator



York

In 2000, just two years before his death from cancer at 68, David Gregson, ever-gracious and generous in his desire to communicate, allowed students from Curtin University into his Kellerberrin studio to film him as he painted.

That he was recovering from recent surgery seemed to matter little to the artist who touched countless lives over a career spanning 50 years as a highly respected teacher and master of colour on canvas.

The resulting footage accompanies the exhibition *David Gregson: A Desire to Relate*, on show at the Alcoa Mandurah Gallery, which curator Gary Aitken insisted should be watched in its entirety by the opening night crowd. "It's important for people to see the whole film rather than snatches of it as they walk past," Aitken says. "It's unique and underlines his eloquent style."

Gregson no doubt would have been pleased his work and techniques would be so accessible — and that his passion for life and art would continue to influence those after him.

The 19-minute film, shot over four days, epitomises the confidence of the artist, revealing the beginnings of his paintings, with jars of different-coloured liquid paint poured over a flat canvas and scraped across the surface.

Working up the painting wet on wet with charcoal and undiluted paint, his technique is fearless. Describing his placement of colour and composition as like a conversation of many people, he says: "Don't let the conversation slip. Give attention where it's necessary."



RICH LIFE David Gregson, seen here in a self-portrait, had an enormous influence.

The resulting work, *Provence Window*, is one of 20 included in the exhibition curated by Catherine Czerw and originally shown at Mundaring Arts Centre in 2008.

MAC director Jenny Haynes says people respond to the pure aesthetic pleasure and fascinating technical accomplishment of his paintings.

"Those who knew him and his work enjoyed the opportunity to recall his art and generosity," Haynes says.

"At times it was quite emotionally moving. The beauty of the way he created and shared is incredible. He affected a whole variety of people, sending them on their own journeys, and now a new generation of students are discovering colour and tone in the way he described it, as an engaging educator."

From 1953, Gregson won almost every major art prize in WA and had a profound influence on other artists through his own work and as a lecturer at TAFE, Curtin University, Edith Cowan University and the University of WA. The last seven years of his life were spent in Kellerberrin, where he and his wife, Gail, bought an old bank and turned it into a studio.

When I interviewed him in 2001, he remained passionate about the worth of living despite his ill health. He described art as his refuge from the extremes of emotion he faced at home at an early age. "My parents were very different people," he said. My father had established Gregson's Auctioneers and home life was not for him. Art was my sanity and my obsession. I was made to feel



ARTS

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Tuesday, December 21, 2010 **THE WEST AUSTRALIAN**



Beyond Light

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JENNY HAYNES

guilty about being preoccupied with it at the expense of so-called more important issues."

Gregson said he felt his life only really began when he studied art at Perth Tech, gaining extra tuition with Howard Taylor whom he greatly respected. "I pursued my work with a love of the language of painting. It's been something of a private affair. Unfortunately my use-by date is closer than expected but in the balance of things my life has been a rich one." ①

David Gregson: A Desire to Relate is at the Alcoa Mandurah Gallery until January 15 and the Bunbury Regional Art Gallery from April 21 to June 26.

David Gregson

A DESIRE TO RELATE



Image Courtesy of The West Australian

In the year 2000, West Australian artist David Gregson allowed students from Curtin University of Technology access to his Kellerberrin studio to film him as he worked.

David, still recovering from recent surgery, completed the painting *Provence Window* over a period of four days.



David Gregson



David Gregson
Provence Window 2000

A DESIRE TO RELATE